



CoastAdapt

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Collaboration and partnerships for climate change adaptation

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Collaboration can achieve many beneficial outcomes for adaptation in areas such as stakeholder participation and buy-in, financing and information availability. Lack of collaboration may result in maladaptation as the scales of the response will not match the scales of the risk.

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At a glance

Collaboration occurs when several parties come together to work through and implement a collective solution to a multi-dimensional problem.

Adaptation is well-suited to a collaborative approach because of the wide range of expertise required, the need for stakeholder engagement to ensure successful outcomes, and the wide spatial scales and long timeframes involved.

Useful collaboration for adaptation can take place within organisations such as small businesses and local councils, between organisations, and between an organisation and its stakeholders.

Collaboration can take place around financing, implementation, knowledge generation, monitoring and evaluation. It can help to realise any opportunities arising from climate change, as well as to address the risks.

CoastAdapt's Coastal Climate Adaptation Decision Support framework (C-CADS) outlines approaches to developing and implementing an adaptation plan or project. It identifies several areas where partnerships and collaboration can play a strong role (see [Using C-CADS](#)).

Main text

Climate change and sea-level rise will affect the coast in different ways, and at widely different spatial and temporal scales. Adapting to the impacts of climate change must draw together solutions that address this complexity by identifying responses that span social, economic and political boundaries and address impacts that can manifest anywhere from tomorrow through to 100 years and further into the future.

Responding appropriately will require careful planning and management. This will be easier and more cost effective if there is collaboration within and between organisations, and between organisations and stakeholders, in order to identify, implement and finance solutions, and to monitor and evaluate their effectiveness. Collaboration is not only needed to address the risks from climate change and sea-level rise, but also to identify and realise the benefits from any potential opportunities.

Collaboration is when multiple parties come together to work through and implement a collective solution to a multi-dimensional problem (Wood and Gray 1991). Here, we provide an overview of the different ways in which collaboration and partnerships can be employed to help adaptation planning and implementation.

Who should collaborate?

Internal collaboration: Many organisations have traditionally taken a sectoral approach to their business, with less interaction between sectors than might be expected. This has led to inconsistencies in approach, the lack of a broad strategic approach to issues, and internal competition for funds and resources. Climate change adaptation is best approached in a cross-sectoral manner. To succeed, it requires the participation of many different departments of an organisation; in a local council from finance through to engineering, planning and maintenance departments. Where there is positive interaction and collaboration between these departments, it is likely that planning and implementation of adaptation will proceed smoothly. This requires leadership, and often someone with management responsibility or authority to ensure that the desired level of collaboration for adaptation takes place. CoastAdapt provides guidance on getting internal buy-in for adaptation action (see [Getting organisational buy-in](#)).

Stakeholder collaboration: Many stakeholders will be affected by climate change and by adaptation actions, and therefore should be involved in adaptation planning and implementation. From the outset of planning, efforts should be made to identify stakeholders and establish processes to ensure their collaboration so that they are fully involved in the decision-making process. This can include forming committees and advisory groups, and involving established stewardship organisations and community groups etc.

Stakeholders can also be businesses, universities and community groups. Through collaboration, stakeholder expertise can be brought into the process, with potential long-term benefits including ensuring the cost-effectiveness of planned actions, and helping to address and resolve competing priorities. CoastAdapt includes case studies showing good practice in collaboration with stakeholders (see link [Lakeside communities' adaptation planning](#) and [Mornington Peninsula community engagement](#)).

Collaboration between organisations: Collaboration across organisations can be essential in order to match the scale of adaptation actions to the scale of climate change risks. In the local government sector, the effects of climate change may cross political boundaries, for example, flooding due to more intense rainfall events may affect a number of councils sharing the same catchment. Working on adaptation solutions collaboratively can help with community acceptance and can make the approach cost effective by achieving economies of scale. CoastAdapt contains a number of case studies showing effective collaboration between diverse organisations: between stakeholders in the Great Barrier reef catchment (see [GBR and climate change](#)), between the Department of Defence and civilian organisations (see [Defence risk assessment](#)), between Sydney coastal councils (see [The SCCG experience](#)), between local councils in Victoria (see the [Victorian Adaptation and Sustainability Partnership](#)), and between state governments (see the [Tweed River sand bypass](#)).

Small to medium enterprises (SMEs) find it difficult to plan for adaptation on their own because of lack of resources and time. By working collaboratively they can save money, take a strategic approach, look at mutually beneficial solutions and use their plans as the basis for engaging with others such as local government. In this way, they can ensure that their needs and desired outcomes are strongly considered in the overarching adaptation planning process for their area.

Collaboration helps organisations to share risks and to pool resources. It enables them to fund research or trial approaches that would not normally be considered to be financially justifiable. For example, Townsville City Council (in Queensland) was an early mover in climate change adaptation and took a strongly collaborative approach. Together with its consultants (GHD Consultants), it partnered with the Local Government Association of Queensland, the Queensland Government and Griffith University to better plan for coastal risks related to climate change. The project highlighted that the limits and enablers to climate change adaptation may occur outside the remit of a local council and therefore collaboration between the utilities, State Government, local businesses and community is the most effective way forward (see [Townsville coastal hazard assessment](#)).

Collaboration and outcomes

Collaboration can support organisations to achieve their desired outcomes by enabling funding, achieving economies of scale, sharing knowledge and expertise, and through facilitating partnerships in implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Collaboration to finance adaptation: Adaptation actions can be expensive, especially when they involve infrastructure, and may need to be financed through innovative mechanisms. For the public sector, resources may simply not be available to pay for adaptation projects. Collaborative arrangements may facilitate alternative solutions through, for example, public-private partnerships (PPPs) (see [Financial resources](#)), or shared costs with a group of potentially at-risk landowners.

Collaboration to implement adaptation: Some adaptation options can be implemented in collaboration with stewardship groups such as bushcare and conservation groups, schools and colleges. Collaborating with these groups will require care in aligning objectives and priorities, but can provide strong community-based support to ensure that outcomes are achieved. For example, Natural Resource Management (NRM) groups in the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) catchment work with a range of volunteers to implement actions to reduce sediment runoff, helping to increase the resilience of the GBR to climate change.

Collaboration and partnerships for research: Collaboration can be used to support generation of new knowledge for climate change planning. Forming relationships with local universities or research institutions can have large benefits for both sides. Organisational knowledge needs can form the basis for student projects, which in turn may lead to large-scale research projects. The applied nature of such projects can help to build the capacity of all partners. For example, Kingborough Council in Tasmania is currently attempting to establish a climate change adaptation innovation hub. The hub will facilitate ongoing research and development for adaptation and will allow world-leading adaptation options to be available to the Council and local businesses. Many research-funding agencies provide funds for collaborative projects between practitioners and research organisations, which provide opportunities to leverage small amounts of money into significant projects.

Collaboration and partnerships for monitoring and evaluation: Monitoring and evaluation (often known as M&E) are core elements of adaptation but are often left to the last minute or under-resourced. There is a range of collaborative approaches for monitoring and evaluation, for example, by forming partnerships with community groups to undertake monitoring. With good support in design and capacity building, such citizen science projects can provide excellent monitoring information. Existing citizen science projects which could be a model for citizen science-based adaptation M&E include WaterWatch Victoria (<http://www.vic.waterwatch.org.au/> , accessed 19 June 2016) and Reef Check Australia (<http://www.reefcheckaustralia.org/> accessed 19 June 2016). It is becoming more common for government organisations to share their data, which allows the social collective (e.g. citizens, non-governmental organisations, consultants, universities, and government) to extract and use already-available information that suits their area of interest.

Collaboration for opportunity: Over time it is likely that climate change adaptation will present opportunities as lessons are learned, and as stakeholders become more engaged in seeking solutions and the benefits that may be derived from these. The innovation sector is an untapped resource that can and should be involved. Increasingly, business and government is establishing structures and processes to help stimulate, foster, and incubate innovative ideas. Being aware of these processes from the outset can help to achieve the best adaptation outcomes.

Source material

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Wood, D., and B. Gray, 1991: Toward a Comprehensive Theory of Collaboration. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, **27**, 139-162.

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